only when we will be able to analyse comparable data, which study has not been done and for which a lot of rain gauges in a lot of those areas are required, that we will be able to more forward. And, the States don't have these things. I have told my Department; let us call the States Governments let us have the statistical data, verify it, and once we know that cloud seeding is possible and fruitful, we shall embark on a National Mission programme. Then, there is no problem at all.

BSNL's demand against MTNL

*406. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that BSNL has raised a demand of Rs. 1,840 crore against MTNL as part of IUC charges;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The details of the demands as reported by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) against Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) are as follows:—

Year	Amount Due (Rs. In Crores)
2000-01	262.66
2001-02	622.16
2002-03	(-)215.51
2003-04	723.88
2004-05 (Provisionally upto November, 2004)	338.57
Miscellaneous	109.56
Total	1842.32
Less Adjustment towards Bond Redemption	(-) 1.88
Net Due from MTNL	1840.44

(c) A Committee has been constituted by the administrative Ministry of two Public Sector Undertakings to address the issue.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a classic case of Government's left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. I was shocked when I read in newspapers that BSNL had made a claim of Rs. 1800 crores on MTNL, when the net profit of MTNL last year was hardly Rs. 1100 crores. If, at any point of time, MTNL obliges to this demand of BSNL, I do not know what will happen to MTNL. I am happy that the administrative Ministry has appointed a Committee to decide this issue between the two public sector units. I would like to know from the Minister when this committee was constituted, who the members of this committee are, whether it was headed by DoT Secretary or somebody else, whether any meeting had been held, what the terms of reference were and whether they had come to any conclusion till today. ..(*Interruptions*)..

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: I want to say, through you, Sir, that the former Minister is suffering from a little amnesia. This issue is related to his period. This started in the year 2000 when he was the Minister for Communications and Information Technology. What he could not achieve...

श्री सभापति: वह मत बताइए। आप तो वह बता दीजिए, जो क्वेश्चन पूछें।

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, he made a statement that Government's left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. If an ordinary Member had said this, I would have kept quiet. But when a former Minister said it, I thought I should make a point. Sir, the point is that this issue has been there from the year 2000. A Committee has been set up on 15th of April. This committee will be giving its conclusion in three months time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 15th April of this year?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Yes, Sir.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, I challenge the present Minister to prove if, at any point of time during my tenure, BSNL has written this letter to MTNL or ...(*Interruptions*)... You see, I heard him quietly. If you want to speak on his behalf, I am ready to listen to you. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: I accept the challenge, Sir. The letter was written now. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him put his question.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, BSNL has been raising a demand in respect of IOC charges since 2001. That does not mean that BSNL has been claiming, by writing, from 2001. The IOC charges regime came in 2003. This regime was not there when I was the Minister. So, there was no question of BSNL writing to MTNL at any point of time. Now, Sir, ...(*Interruptions*) आप सुनिए, Secondly, Sir, BSNL wrote a letter recently and even the committee, if I heard the hon. Minister rightly.. I am subject to correction.. was appointed on 15th of April, just three days back, after the notice of the Question was received. So, if this is amnesia, I do not know what kind of sleep the Ministry is in on this issue.

I was not going to use harsh words. In fact, I had said that I welcomed the formation of a committee. But the Minister has gone tangent on this issue; and I am sorry to reply like this. I really feel sorry to reply like this. Forget about it! The point is this. We put a question. The reply is on the 21st. You appoint a committee on the 15th of April. The newspaper on which I have based this question is of 28th March. So, it was in public knowledge on 28th of March, that BSNL has written to MTNL. And still, 15th April is the date when they set up the Committee. Now, I want to put a little more important and serious question to the hon. Minsiter. Sir, the merger of the BSNL and the MTNL is the only answer to such kind of problems. The Minister has already said umpteen number of times that he has appointed a Committee for the merger of these two telecom giants. I would like to know from the hon. Minister at what stage the decision is.

SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: What about Reliance adjustments?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't bring Reliance here.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I would like to tell the hon. Member, through you, that these claims are right from the year 2000-01, and these are also of the previous Minister's tenure. From the year 2000 itself, the BSNL periodically keeps reminding the MTNL abou its dues. It is not that the BSNL woke up just now. Prior to 2003, there were different revenue-sharing arrangements. I would like to inform the House that it is not correct to say that the Committee was formed on 15th April after the question of the hon. Member was received in the Ministry. It is a routine thing which was done. It is just a coincidence, Sir.

As far as the merger of the BSNL and the MTNL is concerned, I would like to inform the House that a committee has been formed for this purpose and it will take an appropriate decision and advise the Government

on this issue. Based on that advice, the Government will take an appropriate decision on this issue.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Sir, after all, this question was between an ex-Minister and the Minister. As an average M.P., I have to put a supplementary. It cannot be restricted to the Minister and the ex-Ministers only. The question is much more serious than concerning the challenge or counter-challenge of Ministers. It concerns two major public sector undertakings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are in-between.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Yes, I know. It has become rather subjective than objective. The issue is very clear. Sir, part (a) of my supplementary is this. As it appears, these claims are disputed, and these disputed claims are there right from the year 2000 onwards. How is it that this dispute has come in the public all of a sudden? Who is responsible for this? It is not that it has come up all of a sudden. As this is a dispute between two public sector undertakings under the administrative control of one Ministry, it should have been sorted out there. Sir, part (b) of my question is this. Who are the Government nominees in the boards? Are there any common Government nominees in the boards? What were they doing there? What for do we send the Government nominees in these boards? When such a dispute has been going on, someone has to be held responsible for that. The hon. Minister cannot be held responsible for that. Some Government nominees are there in these boards. What were they doing for all these four years when such a dispute was going on there?

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: What was the earlier commitment?

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: I am again saying that this dispute is between two public sector undertakings. I know that the Government nominees are there in these boards. Men may come and men may go, but the bureaucrats are never changed.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, for five years, they were in the Government. Do you think that we should not put any question pertaining to the earlier regime? What is this? New precedents are being set up (*Interruptions*) We should not put any questions pertaining to the earlier regime. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member has put a very good question. There were different kinds of arrangements before the BSNL became a PSU. After the BSNL became a PSU in the year 2000, they had a different kind of arrangement. The TRAI had come in and given different ways of charging the inter connectivity charges. Based on that, the MTNL claims that they are being charged wrongly by the BSNL on the old regime. So, there are little disputes. These are the disputes between the two PSUs. Since these disputes are between the two PSUs, they cannot go to the TDSAT or any other authority. But, they have to go to the concerned administrative Ministry. In this case, the administrative Ministry is the Ministry of Communications. The Ministry has formed a Committee in this regard. The Committee is headed by the Member (Production), Member (Finance) and the DDG concerned. So, these are the members of that Committee.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: What were the Government nominees doing in the boards from 2000 onwards? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: I am answering your question. Sir, there are Board of Directors consisting of Government nominees both in the BSNL and the MTNL. These are administrative issues, and these issues will be settled by the Committee in three months' time. I am assuring the House that this issue is going to be settled in three months' time.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Sir, my question was about the role of the Government nominees in the board, not about the formation of the Committee. For years together, these disputes have been going on. These disputes should have come to the board first, not to the Ministry. The Minister is no understanding my point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wait for three months.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: The issue has to sorted out at the board level first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wait for three months, the disptue will be settled.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: If there is any dispute, it has to be sorted out at the board level. What were the Government nominees doing in the boards of the BSNL and the MTNL? Why didn't they inform the Government immediately? That is my question.

*407. [*The questioner (Shri Surendra Lath) was absent for answer vide page 34*].